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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASUNCION 000815

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/BSC
NSC FOR KIM BREIER
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD DAN JOHNSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/23/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [KCRM](#) [CO](#) [BR](#) [PA](#)

SUBJECT: PARAGUAY: KIDNAPPINGS AND THE FARC

REF: A. ASUNCION 668

[B](#). ASUNCION 589

[C](#). ASUNCION 246 AND PRECEDING

Classified By: Polcouns James P. Merz for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary. An individual arrested in connection to the Cecilia Cubas kidnapping led investigators to the site where Maria Edith Bordon de Debernardi was held after she was kidnapped in November 2001. A Paraguayan prosecutor confirmed press reports clearly linking the two kidnappings. He also indicated there was evidence of possible Colombian/FARC involvement in the earlier kidnapping as well as in the Cubas kidnapping. End Summary.

[2](#). (C) According to Arnoldo Guizzio, the lead prosecutor on the Cecilia Cubas kidnapping, an individual arrested and detained in connection to the Cubas kidnapping is providing investigators with key information. This unnamed informant provided investigators with the name of Mencia, who upon arrest in the Department of Caaguazu, was found reportedly in possession of a vehicle used in connection with the Cubas kidnapping. On June 18, as part of plea bargain with prosecutors Mencia seeks to exempt him from charges, Mencia led investigators to the house located in a residential neighborhood on the outskirts of Asuncion where Maria Edith Bordon de Debernardi was held for over two months after she was kidnapped in November 2001. Debernardi, who was eventually released upon payment of a ransom, confirmed that she had been held captive in a manmade tunnel underneath the house.

Links between Kidnappings, Possible ties to Colombians

[3](#). (C) A number of details linking the two kidnappings suggest Colombian/FARC involvement:

-- Mencia testified that he rented the house where Debernardi was held at the request of Osmar Martinez, the Patria Libre Party (PPL) member arrested and detained on charges of orchestrating the Cubas kidnapping. Martinez has since been charged with involvement in the Debernardi kidnapping as well.

-- Mencia testified that on November 16, 2001, the night Debernardi was kidnapped, he saw in the house where she was held Juan Arrom and Anuncio Marti (PPL leaders living in Brazil as political refugees); Severiano Martinez (alias "Marcos") and Francisca Andino, PPL Secretary General, (both already charged in connection to the Cubas kidnapping and now charged for involvement in the Bordon kidnapping; the former is a fugitive and the latter has been arrested); Alcidos Oviedo Britez (alias "Cesar," recently sentenced to 18 years in jail for involvement in the Debernardi kidnapping); and Gilberto Setrini (remains a fugitive). All have been identified as PPL activists.

-- Mencia identified Oscar Luis Benitez (alias "Ramon") as one of the intellectual leaders of the Debernardi kidnapping. Benitez remains a fugitive.

-- Mencia revealed the aliases of a number of individuals implicated in the Cubas kidnapping.

-- According to Mencia, a "foreigner" constructed in February and March 2001 the tunnel in which Debernardi was eventually held captive. Mencia said he never saw this individual in person and did not explain why he thought the individual was a foreigner. Guizzio indicated investigators believe the individual could have been Colombian with FARC ties.

-- Separately, neighbors have told investigators that several Colombians lived down the street from the house where Debernardi was held at around the same time. Investigators have requested the Migration Department review its records on Colombians who entered Paraguay around that time. The Migration Department is notorious for its bad records. Paraguay requires no visa for entry of Colombians. Guizzio indicated prosecutors were not hopeful the Migration Department would uncover helpful information.

-- Guizzio informed PolCouns that individuals tied to the Bordon kidnapping later appeared in training video for the Cubas kidnapping.

Duarte on Suspects in Brazil

14. (U) In response to queries by the press, President Duarte said that he had not/not raised with President Lula during the Mercosur Summit Paraguay's outstanding request that Brazil return PPL leaders Arrom and Marti to Paraguay to stand trial on charges for involvement in the Debernardi kidnapping. (Note: Brazil granted Arrom and Marti refugee status when they escaped from Paraguay and entered Brazil claiming they had been beaten by police and suffered the threat of political persecution if returned to Paraguay. End Note.) However, Duarte said that he had raised this matter with Lula on prior occasions and hoped Lula would intervene to ensure these individuals face justice in Paraguay.

15. (C) Comment. Mencia's testimony confirms links between the Cubas and Debernardi kidnappings; both involved suspects with confirmed or reported links to the FARC, and the new evidence suggests, but does not prove, FARC involvement in the Debernardi kidnapping itself. Prosecutors are hopeful Mencia will provide more information about the two kidnappings, including more names of individuals involved and information about arms caches. End Comment.

KEANE